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One of These Things is Not Like the Other One in Japan

Learn how to ask what something is

Mark Complete

Also Appears In: Conversational Japanese for Absolute Beginners, Absolute Beginner Season 2

Dialogue | Vocabulary | Lesson Notes | Grammar | Lesson Transcript | Comments

Dialogue - Japanese

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Kanji | English | Rōmaji | All

(At customs)

A: パスポート おねがいします。

それは なんですか。

B: これは おみやげです。

メキシコ の アルコールです。

A: チキーラ？

B: はい。

A: これは なんですか。

B: それは、サラの Diaperです。

A: Diaper？ Diaper は なんですか。

Vocabulary

Hide

English | Kana | Rōmaji

メキシコの [メキシコの]
Mexican
これはメキシコのおかしです。
This is a Mexican sweet.
1 EXAMPLE

これ [これ]
this (one)
これは、ようかんです。
This is soft sweet red bean jelly.
1 EXAMPLE

テキーラ [テキーラ]
tequila
テキーラがだいすきです。
I love tequila.
1 EXAMPLE

おみやげ [おみやげ]
a small gift, a souvenir
これはおみやげです。
This is a small gift for you.
1 EXAMPLE

それ [それ]
that (one)
それはカメラです。
That's a camera.
1 EXAMPLE

パスポート [パスポート]
passport
パスポートを持っています。
I have a passport.
パスポートをもっています。
パスポートのスタンプ
passport stamp
パスポートのスタンプ
アメリカ人のパスポート
American passport
アメリカじんのパスポート
パスポートを持っていますか？
Do you have a passport?
パスポートをもっていますか？
パスポートと搭乗券をお願いします。
Passport and ticket, please.
パスポートとtouじょうけんをおねがいします。
パスポート、ありますか。
Do you have a passport?
パスポートがあります。
I have a passport.
7 EXAMPLES

なんですか。 [なんですか。]
What is it?
これはなんですか。
What is this?
1 EXAMPLE

なん [なん]
what
これはなんですか。
What's this?
1 EXAMPLE

おねがいします [おねがいします]
please
おかいけい、おねがいします。
Check, please.
みずとメニュー、おねがいします。
Some water and a menu, please.
2 EXAMPLES

アルコール [アルコール]
alcohol
これはアルコールですか。
Is this alcohol?
1 EXAMPLE

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Lesson Notes

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Lesson Focus

The Focus of This Lesson Is *Asking What Something Is.*
それは なんですか。
Sore wa nan desu ka.
"What is that?"

In this lesson, you'll learn how to say "what's this?" and "what's that?" in Japanese.

Review: *Kore*, *Sore*, and *Are*

Let's review how to say "this" and "that" in Japanese!

- *We use kore* for an item close to the speaker. → "this one"
- *We use sore* for an item far from the speaker but close to the listener. → "that one near you"
- *We use are* for an item far from both the speaker and the listener. → "that one over there"

Review: Asking What Something Is

Let's review how to ask "what is it?" in Japanese!

Formation

- **[A] wa *nan desu ka*. → "What is [A]?"**
  "*Nan* is a question word meaning "what."

For Example:

[A]	*wa*	*NAN DESU KA.*	"ENGLISH"
Kore	*wa*	*nan desu ka.*	"What's this?"
Sore			"What's that?"
Are			"What's that over there?"

Sample Sentences

1. A.: Yōkan wa nan desu ka.
   B: (*Yōkan wa*) *Nihon no o-kashi desu.*
   A: "What's yōkan?"
   B: "It's a Japanese sweet."
2. A.: Tekīra wa nan desu ka.
   B: (*Tekīra wa*) *Mekishiko no o-sake desu.*
   A: "What's tequila?"
   B: "It's Mexican alcohol."

Reference

- onegaishimasu → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 5
- *nan desu ka?* → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 11

Key Vocabulary & Phrases

★ アルコール (*arukōru*)
Arukōru means "alcohol" or "alcoholic beverage." We commonly use another Japanese word for "alcohol," *o-sake*, in daily conversation. In conversation, we use *arukōru* and *o-sake* interchangeably.

Let's check some names of other beverages...

JAPANESE	"ENGLISH"
mizu	"water"
jūsu	"juice"
o-cha	"tea"
kōhī	"coffee"
bīru	"beer"

★ メキシコの (*Mekishiko no*)
In the dialogue, we had the phrase *mekishiko no arukōru*, which literally means "alcohol of Mexico" and translates to "Mexican alcohol." You can tell from which country the item comes by adding *no* to a name of a country.

- **[Name of a Country] + no + [Noun]**
  Nihon no ohashi → "Japanese sweets"
  Furansu no mizu → "French water"

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Grammar

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Below is a list of the grammar points introduced or used in this lesson. Click for a full explanation.

は何ですか wa nan desu ka
What is —
Introduced

こそあど言葉 kosoado kotoba
ko-, so-, a- & do- demonstrative pronouns
Introduced

Lesson Transcript

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